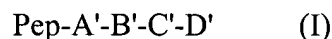


Claim 1 (original): A compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof:



wherein formula (I) is written from N-terminus on the left to C-terminus at the right and:

"Pep" is a peptide or peptide analogue capable of binding to HCV NS3 protease;

A' is a proline residue which is optionally substituted;

B' is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a non-polar side chain;

C' is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a polar side chain; and

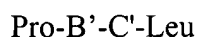
D' is selected from leucine, other amino acids or amino acid analogues having a non-polar aliphatic side chain, and peptides of 2 to 6 amino acids having leucine or other amino acid or amino acid analogue with a non-polar aliphatic side chain as N-terminal residue;

and wherein the bond between Pep and A' is substantially uncleavable by HCV NS3 protease.

Claim 2 (original): The compound of claim 1, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof which is C-terminally amidated.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The compound of claim 1, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof which is N-terminally acylated.

Claim 4 (previously presented): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 1 wherein A'-B'-C'-D' is a tetrapeptide of formula:



wherein B' and C' are as defined in claim 1.

Claim 5 (previously presented): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 4 wherein B' is selected from: β -cyclohexylalanine, phenylglycine, homophenylalanine, norleucine, leucine, methionine, norvaline and β -cyclopropylalanine.

Claim 6 (original): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 5 wherein B' is selected from cyclohexylalanine and phenylglycine.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 5 wherein C' is selected from: aspartic acid, glutamic acid, γ -carboxyglutamic acid, glutamine, asparagine, hydroxyproline, N- β -Aloc- diaminobutyric acid, thiazolylalanine, methionine sulfoxide, pyridylalanine and serine.

Claim 8 (original): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 7 wherein C' is aspartic acid.

Claim 9 (previously presented): A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 4, wherein the combination of amino acids B'C' is selected from:

Cha-Ser

Cha-Asp

Nle-Asp

Hof-Asp

Phg-Asp

Cha-Gln

Nle-Gln

Hof-Gln

Cha-Hyp

Nle-Hyp

Hof-Hyp

Nle-Ser.

Claim 10 (previously presented): A compound, salt, or derivative according to claim 9 wherein Pep-OH is capable of binding HCV NS3 protease, in the absence of the C-terminal residues A'-B'-C'-D', and has an IC₅₀ below 100 μ M in an inhibition assay.

Claim 11 (previously presented): A compound, salt, or derivative according to claim 9 wherein Pep is a hexa-, penta- or tetra-peptide having formula (II) below:



wherein: A is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having an aliphatic side chain of from 1 to 6 carbon atoms;

B is an amino acid or analogue having a non-polar, acidic, or polar but uncharged side group;

C is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a non-polar or acidic side chain;

D is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a hydrophobic side group;

E together with F may be absent, but if present is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having an acidic side chain, non-polar side chain or polar, but uncharged side chain, or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 6 carbon atoms and lacking the amino group of acidic amino acids;

and F may be absent (either by itself, or together with E) but when present is an amino acid or analogue having an acidic side chain or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 6 carbon atoms.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A compound according to claim 11 wherein:

A is selected from: cysteine, aminobutyric acid, di- and tri-fluoro aminobutyric acid, norvaline, allylglycine and alanine;

B is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β -cyclohexylalanine;

C is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β -cyclohexylalanine;

D is selected from: methionine, isoleucine, leucine, norleucine, valine, methylvaline, phenylglycine, diphenylalanine, tyrosine, thienylalanine, and chlorophenylalanine;

E is D-glutamic acid ~~selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, phenylalanine, diphenylalanine, isoleucine, valine, tyrosine, 4-nitrophenylalanine, glutaric acid and succinic acid;~~

and F is selected from: aspartic acid, glutamic acid, glutaric acid and succinic acid.

Claim 13 (canceled):

Claim 14 (previously presented): A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound, salt or derivative according to claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, diluent or carrier.

Claim 15 (canceled):

Claim 16 (previously presented): A method of inhibiting HCV NS3 protease activity, and/or of treating or preventing hepatitis C or a related condition, comprising administering to a human or mammalian subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of a composition according to claim 14.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The composition of claim 14, wherein

A' is proline,

B' is selected from the group consisting of: β -cyclohexylalanine, phenylglycine, homophenylalanine, norleucine, leucine, methionine, norvaline and β -cyclopropylalanine;

C' is selected from the group consisting of aspartic acid, glutamic acid, γ -carboxyglutamic acid, glutamine, asparagine, hydroxyproline, N- β -Aloc- diaminobutyric acid, thiazolylalanine, methionine sulfoxide, pyridylalanine and serine,

D' is Leu,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The composition of claim 17, wherein B' is either phenylglycine or β -cyclopropylalanine, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The composition of claim 17, wherein C' is aspartic acid, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The composition of claim 14, wherein

A' is proline,

D' is leucine,

B'C' is a combination selected from the group consisting of: Cha-Ser, Cha-Asp, Nle-Asp, Hof-Asp, Phg-Asp, Cha-Gln, Nle-Gln, Hof-Gln, Cha-Hyp, Nle-Hyp, Hof-Hyp, and Nle-Ser,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof.

Claim 21 (currently amended): The composition of claim 20, wherein Pep is a hexa-, penta- or tetra-peptide having formula (II) below:

F-E-D-C-B-A

A is selected from: cysteine, aminobutyric acid, di- and tri-fluoro aminobutyric acid, norvaline, allylglycine and alanine;

B is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β -cyclohexylalanine;

C is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β -cyclohexylalanine;

D is selected from: methionine, isoleucine, leucine, norleucine, valine, methylvaline, phenylglycine, diphenylalanine, tyrosine, thienylalanine, and chlorophenylalanine;

E is D-glutamic acid ~~selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, phenylalanine, diphenylalanine, isoleucine, valine, tyrosine, 4-nitrophenylalanine, glutaric acid and succinic acid;~~

and F is selected from: aspartic acid, glutamic acid, glutaric acid and succinic acid
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof.

Claim 22 (previously presented): A method of inhibiting HCV NS3 protease activity, and/or of treating or preventing hepatitis C or a related condition, comprising administering to a human or mammalian subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of a compound according to claim 1.

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Claim 23 (new): The compound of claim 1, wherein said compound has the amino acid sequence of either SEQ ID NO: 103 or SEQ ID NO: 104.